

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 USIA-01 /024 W
-----291833Z 029919 /46

R 291737Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6930
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 05571

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN, OGEN, XH, GW
SUBJECT: POSSIBLE MOVE OF RFE/RL TO U.S.

REF: STATE 57405

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE EMBASSY VIEWS A POSSIBLE RELOCATION
OF A MAJOR PORTION OF RFE/RL'S ACTIVITIES TO THE U.S. AS
FRAUGHT WITH SUBSTANTIAL POLITICAL DANGER AND NO DISCERN-
IBLE BENEFIT. END SUMMARY.

1. THE EMBASSY'S REPLIES TO THE DEPARTMENT'S QUESTIONS
IN THE REFTEL FOLLOW:

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2. A. Q: HOW WOULD A MAJOR RELOCATION OF THE RADIOS
AFFECT FRG PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. PRESENCE AND COMMIT-
MENT IN EUROPE?

A: THE FRG IS VERY SENSITIVE TO ANY INDICATION OF
CHANGE IN THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO EUROPE. THE FRG
WELCOMES A LARGE U.S. PRESENCE IN EUROPE -- AND IN THE

FRG -- BECAUSE IT SEES SUCH A PRESENCE AS A VISIBLE SIGN OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT. RELOCATION TO THE US OF ANY MAJOR U.S. FACILITY OR ACTIVITY WOULD GIVE RISE TO SOME FEARS, BOTH PRIVATELY AND PUBLICLY EXPRESSED, THAT THE U.S. IS WITHDRAWING TO "FORTRESS AMERICA." WHILE THE REACTION TO A MOVE BY THE RADIOS TO THE U.S. WOULD BE LESS THAN, FOR EXAMPLE, A DECISION TO REDUCE DRAMATICALLY THE U.S. TROOP PRESENCE IN THE FRG, THERE WOULD NEVERTHELESS BE A NEGATIVE REACTION IN THE FRG TO THE MOVE AND QUESTIONING OF THE U.S. COMMITMENT TO EUROPE.

B. Q: WOULD A MOVE AT THIS TIME BE PERCEIVED AS A BACKING DOWN FROM OUR HELSINKI COMMITMENTS IN THE FACE OF INCREASED SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN ATTACKS AGAINST THE RADIOS?

A: YES. THE ATTACKS ON THE RADIOS MADE BY COMMUNIST STATES HAVE RISEN DRAMATICALLY SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE HELSINKI ACCORDS. IF WE WERE TO RELOCATE TO THE U.S., OR MAKE ANY OTHER SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE, SUCH AS REDUCTION IN BROADCASTING HOURS OR ALTERATION OF BROADCAST CONTENT, WE SHOULD EXPECT SPECULATION THAT THE CHANGE WAS CAUSED BY PRESSURE FROM THE EAST. WE SHOULD ALSO EXPECT THE COMMUNIST STATES TO FURTHER THIS IMPRESSION THROUGH THEIR PROPAGANDA ACTIVITIES. IF A DECISION TO RELOCATE WERE ANNOUNCED DURING THE BELGRADE CONFERENCE, THE SPECULATION THAT THE MOVE WAS MADE AS A RESULT OF EASTERN ATTACKS WOULD BE MUCH HIGHER THAN IF THE ANNOUNCEMENT WERE MADE AT ANOTHER TIME.
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C. Q: HOW WOULD SUCH A MOVE AFFECT FRG INTERNAL POLITICS, AND MIGHT THE RELOCATION BECOME A DOMESTIC POLITICAL ISSUE? TO WHAT EFFECT?

A: THE FRG HAS JUST UNDERGONE A LONG, IF NOT MAJOR, DEBATE OVER THE EFFECT THAT AN ADMINISTRATIVE CONSOLIDATION OF THE TWO GERMAN RADIOS WHICH BROADCAST TO THE EAST WILL HAVE OVER THE CONTENT OF BROADCASTS TO THE SOVIET UNION. THE CONSERVATIVE OPPOSITION ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF TRYING TO THROTTLE CRITICISM OF THE USSR THROUGH THE CONSOLIDATION MOVE. IT IS PROBABLE THAT A SIMILAR DEBATE WOULD ERUPT OVER RELOCATION. THE CDU/CSU WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY ACCUSE ANY SPD GOVERNMENT OF BEING BEHIND A RELOCATION OF THE RADIOS FROM THE FRG. IF WE SAID THAT THIS WAS NOT THE CASE, THE CDU/CSU WOULD QUESTION OUR JUDGMENT IN MOVING THE RADIOS FROM MUNICH. THUS, RELOCATION COULD BE AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE GOVERNMENT. HAVING SAID THAT, WE

DO NOT BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD BECOME A MAJOR

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R 291737Z MAR 77
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6931
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 BONN 05571

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DOMESTIC ISSUE IN THE FRG.

D. Q: WOULD A MOVE REDUCE THE FRG RESOLVE AND COMMIT-
MENT TO INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTING?

A: YES. THOSE PEOPLE IN THE FRG WHO SUPPORT THE RADIOS
REGARD THEM AS THE "FRONT LINE" OF WESTERN BROADCASTING
EFFORTS. THEY REALIZE THAT IF RFE/RL WERE TO DISAPPEAR
TOMORROW, EASTERN ATTACKS ON DEUTSCHE WELLE
AND DEUTSCHLAND FUNK WOULD INCREASE IN INTENSITY.
THERE WOULD BE A NATURAL REACTION "TO GIVE UP THE
FIGHT, ESPECIALLY SINCE THE AMERICANS DO NOT CARE ANY
MORE." FURTHERMORE, GIVEN THE EXTREMELY OVERCROWDED
SITUATION IN THE EUROPEAN AIRWAVES, WE COULD NOT EXPECT
THE SAME SUPPORT FROM THE FRG WHICH WE CURRENTLY
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RECEIVE IN DEFENSE OF THE RADIOS, FREQUENCIES.

E. Q: WOULD A MOVE MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN THE NECESSARY RFE/RL SKELETON EQUIPMENT AND PERSONNEL, INCLUDING TRANSMITTERS, IN THE FRG?

A: YES (WITH EMPHASIS). THE FRG RECEIVES SOME BENEFITS (PAYROLL, ETC.) FROM THE EMPLOYMENT OF RADIO PERSONNEL IN THE FRG, PRINCIPALLY MUNICH. THE TRANSFER OF THESE EMPLOYEES TO THE U.S. REMOVES SOME OF THE IMMEDIATE BENEFITS THAT THE PRESENCE OF THE RADIOS IN THE FRG BRINGS TO THE FRG. AT THE SAME TIME, IF WE LEAVE TRANSMITTERS AND A SKELETON STAFF IN THE FRG, THE GERMANS REMAIN POLITICALLY LIABLE FOR THE RADIOS. WE HAVE RECENTLY UPGRADED THE TRANSMITTING WE DO FROM THE FRG THROUGH THE IMPORTATION OF TEN NEW 100 KW TRANSMITTERS FOR BIBLIS AND LAMBERTHEIM. WE MAY FURTHER UPGRADE OUR TRANSMITTING FACILITIES AT HOLZKIRCHEN. WE HAVE RECEIVED FULL COOPERATION AND SUPPORT FROM THE FRG, INCLUDING CUSTOMS EXEMPTIONS FOR THE TRANSMITTERS IN THIS ENDEAVOR. IF WE WISH TO CONTINUE THESE OPERATIONS FROM GERMAN TERRITORY, WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT WE WILL HAVE MORE THAN A SKELETON OPERATION IN THE FRG, EVEN WITH THE TRANSFER OF THE BULK OF RADIO PERSONNEL FROM MUNICH.

3. COMMENT: THERE ARE PEOPLE IN THE FRG WHO SUPPORT THE RADIOS AND THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO DO NOT. GENERALLY SPEAKING, THE SPECTRUM OF OPINION IS ABOUT THE SAME AS IN THE U.S., WITH THE IMPORTANT EXCEPTION THAT A MUCH LARGER PERCENTAGE OF THE GERMAN POPULATION IS AWARE OF AND HAS STRONG OPINIONS ABOUT THE OPERATION OF THE RADIOS. THERE ARE UNDOUBTEDLY PRESSURES ON THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT TO REDUCE ITS SUPPORT FOR THE RADIOS. SOME OF THESE PRESSURES ARE FROM THE COMMUNIST NATIONS. OTHERS ARE FROM FACTIONS WITHIN THE FRG, MOST

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NOTABLY THE LEFT WING OF THE SPD. THERE ARE HIGH RANKING OFFICIALS IN THE FRG GOVERNMENT WHO WOULD BE MUCH MORE COMFORTABLE IF THE RADIOS WERE LOCATED SOMEWHERE ELSE. HOWEVER, IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT, DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS WHEN THE FRG HAS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED ITS RELATIONS WITH THE USSR AND EASTERN EUROPE, OFFICIAL GERMAN SUPPORT FOR THE RADIOS HAS NEVER SLACKENED. SINCE WE SHOULD EXPECT THE

COMMUNIST NATIONS TO CONTINUE TO ATTACK THE RADIOS AND THEIR PRESENCE IN THE FRG, NO MATTER HOW SMALL THAT PRESENCE IS, WE SHOULD RESIGN OURSELVES TO THE EXPECTATION THAT EASTERN EUROPEAN ATTACKS ON THE RADIOS IN THE FRG WILL NOT LESSEN IF MAJOR PORTIONS OF THEIR ACTIVITIES ARE MOVED TO THE U.S. GERMAN RESOLUTION TO DEFEND THE RADIOS MAY.

4. QUITE ASIDE FROM QUESTIONS DERIVING FROM THEIR PRESENCE IN THE FRG, THE EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS ITS AGREEMENT WITH OBSERVATIONS OF OUR EMBASSIES IN EASTERN EUROPE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW RELOCATION TO THE U.S. WOULD NOT ADVERSELY AFFECT THE QUALITY OF BROADCASTING. FURTHERMORE, WHILE WE ARE NOT EXPERT, WE QUESTION THE ESTIMATED SAVINGS TO THE RADIOS. FOR EXAMPLE, RADIO MANAGEMENT IN MUNICH CLAIMS THAT THE PROJECTED SAVINGS DISAPPEAR AS THE \$/DM EXCHANGE RATE RISES TO 2.70. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE DEPARTMENT LOOK LONG AND HARD AT THE ESTIMATED SAVINGS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, RADIO STATIONS, ESTABLISHMENT OF OFFICES, RADIO BROADCASTING, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 29-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BONN05571
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770107-0817
Format: TEL
From: BONN
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770313/aaaaakqs.tel
Line Count: 244
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 9c4fa1b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: 77 STATE 57405
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2969929
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE MOVE OF RFE/RL TO U.S.
TAGS: SOPN, OGEN, XH, GE, US, RFE, RL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/9c4fa1b0-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009